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What is the Function of the University?

How differences in morality polarizes the debate

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how differences in morality polarizes the debate of what the function of the university should be, and how that might indicate a potential organizational crisis for Lund University. The study is primarily based on the case concerning the removal of teacher Johan Grant, that took place at Lund University in the fall of 2019. The thesis intends to expand knowledge in the field of organizational crisis communication, and to increase the understanding of the social climate of the university world. Through a phenomenological approach, qualitative interviews and textual analysis have been conducted. The empirical material has been analyzed through the rhetorical arena theory and moral foundation theory. The analysis indicates that there are several interpretations of what the function of the university should be and that those interpretations can appeal to different moral foundations. Further, the findings propose that different moral foundations might be in conflict with each other, thus polarizing the debate of what the function of the university should be. The authors stress the importance of dialogue in order to avoid a potential future crisis within Lund University.

Keyword: Lund University, strategic communication, moral foundation theory, rhetorical arena theory, crisis communication, safetyism, academic freedom

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Table of contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1 Problem definition	8
1.2 The aim of the study and research questions	9
1.3 Delimitations	10
2. Background and previous research	11
2.1 The history of the university	11
2.2 Academic freedom	12
2.3 What is safetyism?	13
2.4 Honor culture, dignity culture and victimhood culture	15
3. Theoretical framework	17
3.1 Organizational crisis	17
3.2 The three stages of crisis	18
3.3 Rhetorical arena theory	19
3.4 Moral foundation theory	21
4. Method	24
4.1 Scientific perspective	24
4.1.2 Interpretative phenomenology	24
4.2 Textual analysis	25
4.3 Interviews	26
4.4 The selection of our interviewees	27
4.5 Implementation	28
4.6 Methodological reflection	28
5. Analysis	30
5.1 Macro-analysis	30
5.1.2 The various voices within the arena	31
5.2 Micro-analysis	34
5.3 What are the competing modes of morality found in actors' interpretations of the function of the university?	35
5.3.1 Care/harm	35
5.3.2 Fairness/cheating	38
5.3.3 Loyalty/betrayal	40
5.3.4 Authority/subversion	41
5.3.5 Sanctity/degradation	43

5.3.6 Liberty/oppression	44
6. Conclusion and further research	46
7. Discussion	49
References	51
Appendix	56

1. Introduction

In the autumn of 2019, psychologist and teacher Johan Grant became the center of attention in a nation wide media outbreak regarding the workshop “Externatet” at Lund University. Grant has been teaching the course “Psykologernas arbete i grupper och organisationer (The psychologists’ work in groups and organizations)” for eight years, and the course has been part of the psychology program since the 1980s. Part of the course is a two-day workshop outside of campus, called Externatet. Some previous students regard the workshop as unnecessarily demanding and cruel, while others deem it to be one of the most valuable experiences during their whole study time (Lennartsson, 2020). The workshop aims to investigate and reveal students' ideas about authorities, as well as their values and personally held beliefs, based on the Tavistock method of analysis. However, last year, what started off as a discussion on a closed Facebook group, eventually led to five students reporting to the director of studies office, accusing teacher Grant of being sexist, homophobic and bigoted. The students claimed that the course had caused them severe anxiety, sleeping disorders, and emotional pain. One student said that they had become suicidal due to the extravagant circumstances of Externatet and Grant’s way of teaching (2020). They, therefore, wished to be relieved from the course. The morning after, the director of studies sent out an email to the whole teacher group, saying that the students who reported the incident immediately were to be let off the course. A few weeks later, Grant received a message from the head of the faculty, stating that the department had lost faith in him as a suitable teacher for Externatet. Without any further investigation, Grant was removed both as a teacher for Externatet, and for the entire course as well, after eight years of consistent lecturing. Grant has reported himself for discrimination by both the students, the head of faculty and the director of studies (2020). The report is still under investigation during the writing of this thesis. Grant says the following in an interview with Lundagård: “You have to be able to differentiate subjective opinions and objective harassments; the latter has never occurred.” (2020). Director of studies uttered this statement in response to the incident: “When students feel as badly as these ones did, regardless if they are a minority, we have to act.” (2020).

In the aftermath of the removal of Grant, a national debate about the current shape of Swedish universities opened up. While some took the side of the offended students, portraying Grant as a bigoted and insensitive character (Landenius & Dahlstedt, 2020), others described the incident as another example of student influence gone overboard, upsetting the very function of the university (Skogskär, 2020). Some columnists even went so far as to describe how the university, during the last couple of years, has succumbed to political activism, which endangers academic freedom (Jaenson, 2020). The discrepancy in opinions about what constitutes the function of the university poses a strategic communicative challenge for Lund University. The institution has to tend to the external demands from its many stakeholders, who are seemingly in conflict with each other, while simultaneously acting in accordance with its own core values. For this thesis, we will look at the conflict between stakeholders as a possible indicator of an organizational crisis for Lund University, where we will aim to understand different interpretations of the debate, in order to generate insight for the university, so that they may better mediate it strategically.

“The function of the university” is a broad and multifaceted term. It might entail its laws, regulations and accordances. However, in this thesis, we have limited the definition of the function of the university, to what one believes that the university should strive for in terms of its vision and goals, as well as how one should feel within the university. Besides what took place in the autumn of 2019, there have been a couple of scenarios at Lund University during the last few years that share some of the characteristics of the Grant-incident.

In 2017, political scientist Erik Ringmar chose to shut down his course in critics of modern society at Lund University after having been pressured by the department to include more female writers in the course syllabuses (Ringmar, 2017). The encouragement to include more female writers stems from the gender citation gap - a study that showcases how women are systematically cited less frequently than men (Maliniak, Powers & Walter, 2013). The department’s recommendation was to include Judith Butler in the syllabuses. According to Ringmar, she along with other female writers were not relevant, since he was using primary sources from the 19th century when few women were writing publicly at all. Ringmar chose to ignore the exhortation from the department, which led students to report Ringmar to higher authorities. “Never before, in my 20 years of teaching, have students turned to the head of

faculty to complain.” (Ringmar, 2017:21). Butler later responded negatively to being included in the literature list, claiming that her work was not relevant for Ringmar’s course. This attracted worldwide attention from international news media, such as Germany’s biggest newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, who wrote critically about the current shape of Swedish universities (Steinfeldt, 2020). Ringmar went on to write a book on how academic freedom has come under attack from activist students and that there is an urge to “liberate the university”. However, in a review of the book, political scientist Bo Rothstein claims that Ringmar’s critique is excessive and that many of the ideas are ludicrous (Rothstein, 2019). Rothstein advocates for a “conscious relation to gender” in order to combat the strong male dominated tradition within universities (2019).

Another disputed incident took place in the department of medicine at Lund University in 2018, where professor of neurophysiology Germund Hesslow, who has been teaching the course “Arv och Miljö” for many years, upset some students when he spoke about biological and sexual differences between men and women. More specifically, Hesslow had mentioned that homosexual women tend to have more of a male sexual orientation than heterosexual women do, and that transexualism perhaps should not be defined as a sexual orientation at all (ARW, 2018). The offended students reported Hesslow for discrimination and he was asked by the board to form an official apology. Hesslow refused to do so and formulated an open letter in defence of his utterances, referring to the scientific evidence supporting his claims (2018).

Whether the instances described above could be regarded as trivial or even random is up for debate. It is certainly the case that universities always have to deal with the opposing forces of students' opinions and teachers' perspective on things and that disputes are vital and necessary for a university to thrive. Challenging a teacher about their claims and scientific basis is an essential part of how knowledge evolves over time. However, by looking at the hot-tempered debate that has been circulating in the aftermath of Grant’s removal, there is reason to dig deeper. In order for us to better grasp what some columnists are referring to when they describe the decline of Swedish universities, we turn our attention to what is currently going on on campuses around the United States.

In *Coddling of the American Mind*, authors Haidt and Lukianoff paint an alarming picture of the current shape of the university world in America, where public speech bans and literature censorship have become common instances (2018). According to the authors, a change took place on campuses in 2014 when students born after 1995 were entering college. This new generation of students, called the iGeneration, behave and feel differently than previous generations, according to psychologist Jean M. Twenge (Twenge, 2018). Overall, they appear to be more anxious and are deeply concerned with emotional safety (2018). This has, in turn, created a series of new terms - such as safe spaces, trigger warnings and microaggressions - that serve to eliminate the risk of students getting offended or hurt. The terms are now well established in most, if not all, US colleges (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2018). Haidt and Lukianoff have named this social phenomenon *safetyism* (2018).

Needless to say, the situation in the US cannot be translated directly to that of Sweden, due to cultural and institutional differences. The US model can, however, serve to illustrate trademarks and characteristics of a current trend within the Western university world, which can be helpful for countries like Sweden to learn from. From a strategic communicative perspective, the polarized debate that occurred after Grant's removal has put Lund University in a challenging situation. Whereas one side advocates for a more inclusive and tolerant university, the other is concerned with how this will affect academic freedom. The discussion about what constitutes the function of the university, as well as academic freedom, is not only occurring outside of the university, but takes place inside as well, between students, teachers and researchers. Hence, in order to enable dialogue, a better understanding of how and why people interpret the situation so differently is much needed.

1.1 Problem definition

The premise of this thesis is based on the idea that crisis in organizations are not only occasional and momentary, but can grow and evolve over time (Heide & Simonson, 2016). That is to say, a crisis does not have to occur out of an external event or disaster of some sort, but can develop through minor instances that finally take the form of a crisis. Heide and Simonsson stress that in order to avoid the urgent stage of crisis, organizations must enable a climate where openness and dialogue is encouraged, so that early indicators of an

organizational crisis can be detected (2016). Based on how polarized the debate has become, both online and inside of the institution, we argue that the discrepancy in perception of what the function of the university should be, can be interpreted as an early indicator of an oncoming crisis. What makes the situation particularly complex is that the university has to maintain relationships with its many stakeholders although these might not agree with each other. It can be argued, therefore, that it is not the instances themselves that pose a potential threat of an oncoming crisis for Lund University, but rather how the modes of interpretation regarding the university's function differ from one another, and the lack of consensus among them.

Little previous research has investigated, from a strategic communicative viewpoint, how the university's different stakeholders interpret the function of the university, and why that is. Likewise, little research has been conducted regarding how those interpretations might clash, and thus setting the stage for a potential organizational crisis. Scholars such as Haidt & Lukianoff (2018), Furedi (2017) and Campbell & Manning (2018) have used sociological explanations as to why universities in the US are changing, looking at factors such as safetyism and victimhood culture, but none have investigated how morality affects one's perception of what the function of the university entails. In this thesis, we hope to further investigate this phenomenon and contribute with knowledge to the field of crisis communication of how various foundations of morality polarize the debate. The Grant-incident will be used as a case study in order to concretize how differently people interpret the function of the university.

1.2 The aim of the study and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to explore what voices emerged within the rhetorical arena after the removal of Grant, and to understand what competing modes or morality can be found in actors' interpretations of what constitutes the function of the university. By performing a phenomenological analysis of interviews and collection of electronic news media, through the theoretical framework of rhetorical arena theory (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017) and moral foundation theory (Haidt, 2012), we aim to understand the lived experiences of various voices, how they interpret what constitutes the function of the university, and how those

interpretations might differ. Rhetorical arena theory serves to highlight the communicative complexities between actors during a crisis (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017) whereas moral foundation theory might be insightful as to why actors interpret the situation differently from each other. Moral foundation theory presents primarily six different modes of morals commonly found cross-culturally within individuals (Haidt, 2012). Hopefully, this thesis will contribute with an insight on how different modes of morality might clash, so that Lund University, if in crisis, has a thorough understanding of how their actions might be perceived. The research questions are designed to help us better understand the polarized debate of what constitutes the function of the university. The study will contribute to the knowledge of crisis communication within universities in the field of strategic communication.

Research questions

1. What were the emerging voices within the rhetorical arena that opened up when Johan Grant was removed?
2. What are the competing modes of morality found in actors' interpretation of the function of the university?

1.3 Delimitations

Firstly, the thesis has been delimited to the perspective of strategic communication. Thus, other perspectives that might be relevant to the thesis will not be included. Secondly, the research of the thesis is conducted in a qualitative manner which limits the amount of generalizable results, and serves to understand a complex social phenomenon rather than proving the frequency of that phenomenon. Thirdly, the thesis exemplifies primarily by studying the case of Grant, and is therefore limited to the amount of relevant voices as well as the time span that has been taken into account when gathering electronic news media. This specific event has been chosen as it was the event that caused the most news coverage and occurred more recently than any of the other instances described in the introduction. Lastly, the phenomenological perspective used within the thesis relies heavily on the interpretation of the researchers themselves. That being said, we have done our utmost in order to avoid being biased or interpreting any voice in a manner that serves any agenda, in accordance to recommendations from Wojnar & Swanson (2007).

2. Background and previous research

In this section of previous research, we will present the history of the university and interpretations of academic freedom. Furthermore, we will discuss the meaning of the term safetyism as well as the moral landscape of dignity culture and victimhood culture. This will serve to understand what context the modern university operates in.

2.1 The history of the university

The first university, Al Quaraouiyine, was founded in 859 A.D in Fez, Morocco (Ringmar, 2017). During centuries to come, universities spread across Europe, starting off in Bologna and Paris in the 13th century. From the early days, the universities were autonomous and self regulating but nonetheless heavily influenced by the church and religious praxis. However, during the middle ages when the state came to outgrow the church in power and influence, the universities were modified to better suit the needs and demands of the nation. After the French revolution, scholars such as Wilhelm von Humboldt founded the University of Berlin, based on the new ideals of the enlightenment (Degerblad & Hägglund, 2001). His vision was a university where both students and teachers dared to think independently in the search for truth. Teachers were allowed to teach on whatever subject they wanted, using what literature they deemed to be appropriate. Students, on the other hand, had no obligation to attend class and had the freedom to study whatever they wished to study. The same concept of the ideal university was transferred to the United States and John Hopkins University where it came to shape the world's leading universities, such as Harvard, Princeton and Yale.

Today's universities look a lot different. Apart from being massive institutions with thousands of employees, demands from external sources are constantly being put on the university; be that from trade and industry, politicians, organizations or even private citizens (Ahlbäck-Öberg et al., 2016). But for the most part, as in Sweden, the university is governed by the state. As a way to make Swedish universities more effective, *new public management* was introduced by the state in 2011 (2016). The idea was that the university should be treated

more as a private company, striving for cost-efficiency, with clear hierarchies and a decentralised structure of government so that faster decisions could be made. In *Det Hotade Universitetet* (The Threatened University), Ahlbäck-Öberg et al. argue that new public management is one of the key denominators in what is affecting the way in which research is conducted within Swedish universities. Due to the limited time-spans, project based thinking and heavy competition to win financing, the quality of research is shifting, and not for the better (2016).

2. 2 Academic freedom

Although most universities include the philosophy and practice of academic freedom in their core values, what the term actually means have long been contested. Some regard academic freedom as equivalent to free speech, i.e. the freedom of teachers and students to speak out freely on issues, regardless of the level of controversy, without them being penalized for doing so (Furedi, 2017). Others interpret academic freedom as a form of professional autonomy that enables academics to do their work well, such as researchers having the freedom to engage in whatever subject they deem meaningful. Finn (2018), states that the main purpose of academic freedom is to protect teachers from backlash when discussing controversial topics in the classroom. Further, he argues that teachers' academic freedom should be a professional responsibility that depends on whether the educational goals of the course are achieved with the chosen way of lecturing.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) has provided all of the universities within the UN with specific guidelines to ensure the quality of education as well as the retention of peace and international collaboration. According to UNESCO, the recommendation for academic freedom can be defined as “the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.” (UNESCO, 2017).

Even though academic freedom is held as a prestige and virtue for most universities, critics claim that many universities have paradoxically become the one place where the threshold for tolerance is very low (Ringmar, 2017). Instead of merely critiquing alternative points of view, some ideas are entirely condemned (2017). In a Swedish report investigating students and teachers views on academic freedom, the majority of the respondents claim that academic freedom is highly valuable, being the one thing that makes universities unique in relation to the rest of society (Högskoleverket, 2005). At the same time, the participants in the study stated that they were not able to utilize that freedom. The report (2005) presents two fundamental factors to explain why that is: 1) Researchers are increasingly being forced to meet the demands of external financiers. 2) Swedish universities have expanded enormously and transformed from elite-universities to mass-universities. That is to say, a much larger and more diverse group of students are now occupying the universities, affecting the general level of previous knowledge and teachers capacity to tend to each and every student's demands.

Due to the polarized debate on what is happening within universities, the department of higher education (DoE) recently proposed an addition to the law of higher education, where the principle of academic freedom is to be of greater significance for all Swedish universities by the first of July, 2021 (Regeringskansliet, 2020). The DoE claims that academic freedom is perhaps of greater significance now than ever before, much due to the internet and social media where disinformation, propaganda and extremism is spreading faster. The harsh climate online has in turn affected the working conditions of many researchers, where 21 out of 26 universities experienced that researchers risks being subjected to harassments, threats and violence (Statskontoret, 2018).

2.3 What is safetyism?

Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff claim that universities in the US have been undergoing a drastic transformation since 2014 in what they term "the rise of safetyism" (2018:24). The authors describe safetyism as "... an obsession with eliminating threats, both real and imagined, to the point at which people become unwilling to make reasonable

trade-offs demanded by other practical and moral concerns.” (2018:32). Today, the word safety not only refers to the physical aspect of lack-of-danger, but to more commonly include emotional safety (2018). Through this shift in semantics, the impact of words and their potential to inflict emotional harm on the individual has consequently created a series of new terms associated with the university-world in the US, such as safe spaces, trigger warnings and microaggressions.

Safe spaces refers to a physical place, concerned with psychic benefits and not the avoidance of physical harm, where students can meet without the fear of judgement from others (Boostrom, 1998). In 1998, Robert Boostrom wrote an article where he reflects on the meaning of the metaphor “safe spaces”. Boostrom states that while it is true that students tend to thrive in classrooms when there is an absence of threat, eliminating the possibility to criticize and discuss sensitive topics undermines the capacity to grow, both intellectually and personally (1998). Instead, Boostrom argues for teachers to learn to manage conflict, rather than prohibiting it. In addition, researcher Betty J. Barrett claims there is a dearth of empirical evidence documenting the effectiveness of safe spaces (2010). Barret argues that both educators and students are better served by the development of an alternative to safe spaces, such as classroom civility.

Trigger warnings were popularized on campuses in the US in 2014 (Campbell & Manning, 2018), where the word ”trigger” refers to the experience most commonly held by people who suffer from PTSD where certain experiences can cause panic attacks and flashbacks in which they relive their traumatic experiences. Students obliged teachers to include trigger warnings in selected content, such as books, movies or certain topics discussed during the course, as a way to inform and warn other students about course material that might cause emotional harm (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2018).

The term microaggression was popularized by psychologist and diversity training specialist Derald Wing Sue, who has defined the term in the following way: ”the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, and sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group” (2010:5). Deciding

what instances that can be defined as micro-aggressions can be difficult, since it lies in the eyes of the beholder to make that judgement. Here are a few examples of actions that have been identified as microaggressions by scholars and columnists: telling an Asian American that he/she speaks English well (Sue, 2010), staring at lesbians or gays expressing affection in public (Runyowa, 2015), using the phrase "you guys" to address a group of men and women (Saul, 2016).

2.4 Honor culture, dignity culture and victimhood culture

In *The Rise of Victimhood Culture*, sociologist Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning describe how different cultures of morals have influenced the Western world throughout history (2018). Before industrialization, honor culture was the dominating moral code of behaviour. It would be characterized by a strong and often violent response to offence and slight. A typical way of handling a large dispute would be to duel, putting your life on the line for the sake of your honor. But as society gradually developed and civilization became more individualized, the culture shifted into what can be termed dignity culture, which is still the most dominant culture in Western democracies (2018). In a culture of dignity, one handles insults and slights differently, with a tactic of "brushing it off". People are expected to have sufficient self-control to retain composure in the face of irritations and minor conflicts, as they pursue their own goals. However, during instances of larger conflict when the tactic of ignoring is not sufficient, people will appeal to an authoritative to solve the conflict. During the last decade, Campbell and Manning have been studying the rise of what they term victimhood culture, which has been especially prevalent in universities around the US (2018). Victimhood culture can be characterized by three attributes: 1) individuals and groups display high sensitivity to slight; 2) they have a tendency to handle conflict through complaints to third parties; 3) they seek to cultivate an image of being victims who deserve assistance (2018). By those standards, victimhood culture shares with honor culture the imperative to react vigorously to insult, and with dignity culture an inclination to appeal to higher authorities in occasions of dispute. What is new within victimhood culture is the moral and social status that is attributed to the "victim". Furthermore, Campbell and Manning argue that manufacturing a case of victimhood allows the "oppressed" to evoke sympathy or even

mobilize legal authorities against their enemies (2018). Because of the potential gain in moral status that is attributed to the victim, there lies a danger in the potential false claims of victimization.

The difference in moral values between dignity culture and victimhood culture sets the stage for creating tension and discord between two groups. On one side, those who resonate with the ideals of dignity culture sees people who highlight their victimhood as thin-skinned and perhaps oversensitive, while those whose morality is rooted in the newer culture of victimhood views the other side as insensitive and perhaps bigoted (2018).

3. Theoretical framework

In this section, we will present our theoretical framework that will aid us in answering our research questions. We start off by explaining what constitutes an organizational crisis, and then continue to present our two main theories. The Rhetorical Arena Theory serves to help us understand what voices emerged in the rhetorical arena after the removal of Grant, so that a deeper understanding can be reached about which actors got involved and how they relate to each other. Moral Foundation Theory is used to help us illustrate the difference in perception with regards to the Grant-incident, but also how the various voices interpret the very function of the university, and why that is.

3.1 Organizational crisis

A crisis might be understood differently depending on what relation a stakeholder has to it (Heide & Simonsson, 2016). It might be organizational, personal or societal. Thus, there are many different definitions of a crisis. For this thesis, we have chosen to use Frandsen and Johansens definition of the term, who understands the crisis as “a complex and dynamic configuration of communicative processes which develop before, during and after an event or situation that is interpreted as a crisis by an organization and/or by other voices in the arena” (2017:25). Heide & Simonsson state that a crisis might be perceived as an entirely negative phenomenon, but that it certainly does not have to be (2016). Further, they describe that a crisis might enable critical adjustment and transformation. Bozeman argues that “bad things happen in and to organizations” (2011:120, cited in Heide & Simonsson, 2016:27). This quote is not meant to insinuate that a crisis must be a bad thing per se, but rather that an organizational crisis will happen to every organization, sooner or later. In this thesis, we will focus entirely on the organizational notion when we use the word crisis.

3.2 The three stages of crisis

Organizational crisis has long been understood as an isolated and abrupt event, suggesting that crisis communication should be employed only during the onset of a crisis (Heide & Simonsson, 2016). However, more recent theories suggest a prolonged understanding of the event (2016). Instead of only acting when a crisis has erupted, Gerald Meyers depicts crises as an abstract phenomena containing three stages, that is not restrained to only the event of the crisis (1987, cited in Heide & Simonsson, 2016). The stages of crises are described as follows:

Prevention stage: The stage before the onset of a crisis is the most prolonged stage as it is constant and ever existing. The prevention stage emphasizes that all crises exist before they fully bloom (2016). Hence, this stage defines slow changes, perceived risks and incidents as potential indicators of an oncoming crisis. Heide and Simonsson state that a crisis often takes form because of the lack of precautionary actions against it (2016). Thus, proactivity is the key component in this stage or crisis communication. Further, they argue that in order for an organization to gain access to information that might indicate the crisis, it must be connected to all levels of information (2016). That is, the organization must adopt a culture that allows for information to flow upwards and downwards in the hierarchy without obstacles. For this thesis, the prevention stage is the premise of our investigation, since we do not argue that Lund University is currently in a crisis, nor that they definitely will be.

Urgent stage: As the crisis emerges, another stance towards it is adopted. At this stage, Heide and Simonsson argue that an organization must apply a more direct and executive mode of action (2016). Time is of the essence, and an assessment of the situation is critical in order to start the direct actions to weaken the negative consequences of the crisis. This might include establishing communications towards all parties involved, as to diminish the spread of rumours.

Rebuilding stage: After the crisis is successfully permeated, or in other ways cease to be critical, work must be done to repair the damage done. This might include work to

rehabilitate the affected organs of the organization, or to repair the damage done to its image. This stage is, just as the prevention stage, prolonged. Heide and Simonsson describe that in order to restore an organization's legitimacy it must work effectively and constantly to convince its stakeholders of its worth (2016).

3.3 Rhetorical arena theory

Rhetorical arena theory (RAT) is a multi-vocal approach to crisis communication. The theory, developed by Frandsen and Johansen, presents a possible explanation of the communicative complexities between several actors during an organizational crisis (2017). More precisely, RAT serves to present the crisis as a metaphor, that of an *arena*, and within it several *actors*, which correspond with one another through their *voices*. The arena is a conceptual space that only exists in relation to an organizational crisis, shaping a temporary place of thought in which several actors might confer (2017). Notably, Frandsen & Johansen state that the actors within the arena might act strategically in order to achieve their goals (2017). The arena serves as a suggestive framework, meaning that researchers might apply relevant theories within the rhetorical arena, depending on the context of the crisis. In our study, the voices in the arena are analyzed through the moral foundation theory (Haidt, 2012), which we will discuss in section 3.4. In this thesis, we are using RAT as an analytical tool in order to comprehend the social complexity of the Grant-incident, although RAT is more commonly used during an organizational crisis (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). Within RAT, there's a distinction between a macro- and a micro perspective (Gulbrandsen & Just, 2016). However, the analysis of this thesis will primarily focus on using the micro perspective. Hence, the macro perspective will only briefly be summarized:

The macro perspective gives an insightful, analytical and practical overview of the arena, and the voices communicating within it. They interact with each other in relation to the crisis (Gulbrandsen & Just, 2016). They communicate with, against and about each other. Some voices completely ignore each other. Frandsen & Johansen emphasize that every voice within the arena is a communicative process of its own, and thus the arena might open or close regardless of the organizations own perception of the crisis (2017). Frandsen & Johansen

highlight that the arena is too volatile and complex for a single actor to have overview over its entirety (2017).

The micro perspective focuses on the individual processes of communication. Communicative signals are understood as from a sender to a receiver, through analysis of four determining factors: context, media, genre and text (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). These serve to give insight as to how the voices might be perceived by different actors within the arena.

Context: The first factor, context, is divided into both the social and psychological context of a voice (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). The social context is placed within three sub-genres. The situational sub-genre is concerned with who the sender and receiver is, when, where & what is said. The organizational sub-genre is concerned with the communicative culture and regulations of the organization. The national-cultural sub-genre accounts for norms and social structures. The psychological context highlights cognitive schemes such as previous experiences, events and the perception of these.

Media: Media aims to encompass the many different channels communication might travel through (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). Not only digital and traditional media is relevant, but elements such as the human body is also accounted for. Hence, media serves to exemplify any channel the communication might travel through.

Genre: The third factor of the communicative process is genre (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). The genre of the communicative processes aims to understand what structural element the communication is characterized by. Examples of different genres are press releases, speeches, or news articles (2017).

Text: The factor of text is seen as a product of the communicative processes (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). It can be verbal or written communication. It is heavily relying on the process of en- and decoding, meaning through a sender and a receiver. Text also includes *spoken word*, which means the semiotic implications of certain actions (2017). Text is the meaning of something visual, which does not have to be a combination of the characters in the alphabet.

3.4 Moral foundation theory

There has long been a debate on how humans have developed into the moral and reasoning beings that we are. The most common answers have been that morality is either innate or that it comes from childhood learning (Haidt, 2012). Another popularized theory, developed mainly by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg, is the rationalist answer, which dominated moral psychology during the later part of the 20th century. From this perspective, justice is the key concept in moral reasoning. For instance, kids understand that harm is wrong because they hate to be harmed, which makes them see that it is therefore wrong to harm others. This, in turn, is what leads them to understand justice and fairness (2012). The rationalist perspective was later criticized by Haidt for its lack of focus on issues of emotions. According to Haidt, intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second. That is to say, moral judgement is primarily guided by the individuals emotions and moral intuitions, which the mind seeks to justify or explain by post-hoc rationalization of already formed judgements (2012).

In researching what various sources could be attributed moral intuitions, Haidt and his collaborators developed what would later be termed the moral foundation theory. The theory is based on the premise that intuitive ethics of humans have developed by and through evolution as a response to adaptive challenges. These ethics form a cognitive module that is later shaped by culture. In the current state, six moral foundations have been found (2012).

Care/Harm: This foundation is characterized by compassion and is related to mankind's evolutionary development as mammals that can feel and sympathize with the pain of others, due to the investment of time in the upbringing of one's offspring. Caring and kindness are considered virtues, as is protection against harm, whereas common triggers are suffering, distress or neediness expressed by the more fragile or victimized.

Fairness/cheating: In this foundation, fairness, trustworthiness and justice are considered virtues. Adaptive challenges would be reaping the benefits of two-way partnership or not rewarding participants proportionally. It is related to the evolutionary process of reciprocal altruism, which generates ideas of justice, rights and autonomy. Rendered justice according

to shared rules is viewed as optimal. Triggers are commonly found in cheating and deception, where the typical response would be emotions of anger or even disgust.

Loyalty/betrayal: This moral foundation is triggered by a threat or challenge to one's own group and is related to our long history as tribal creatures who are able to form shifting coalitions. It makes us sensitive to signs that another person is, or is not, a team player, making us want to hurt, ostracize or even kill those who betray us or the group. Loyalty, patriotism and self-sacrifice are considered virtues.

Authority/subversion: This moral foundation has its roots in our long primate history of hierarchical social interaction, based on the emotions of respect and fear. It is characterized by respect for tradition and authorities, where leadership and followership are considered virtues. It makes us sensitive to signs of status or rank, and to signs that other people are (or are not) behaving properly, given their position.

Sanctity/degradation: This foundation, shaped by the psychology of disgust and contamination, acts of temperance, chastity, piety and cleanliness are considered virtues. Original triggers include sights, smells or other sensory patterns that predict the presence of dangerous pathogens in people or objects. Within the sanctity/degradation foundation, some things are regarded as "untouchable", both in the way that it is so dirty or polluted that we want to stay away from it, or in the sense that it is hallowed or sacred, which makes us want to protect it from desecration.

Liberty/oppresion: This moral foundation evolved in response to the adaptive challenges of living in small groups where some individuals would, given the chance, dominate, bully and constrain others. Triggers include signs of attempted domination or violations of one's liberty. A common emotional response to triggers is what is sometimes called reactance; i.e. the feeling you get when an authority tells you you are not allowed to do something, and you feel yourself wanting to do it even more strongly. This foundation is often in tension with the intuitions of the authority/subversion foundation.

Haidt's functionalistic definition of what constitutes a moral system is as follows: "Moral systems are interlocking sets of values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, technologies, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate self-interest and make cooperative societies possible." (2012:314). Haidt states that human societies are never founded upon only one moral foundation, and neither are humans.

In contrast, the mind can be perceived as containing a toolbox of psychological systems, including all of the six foundations. Depending on what culture one lives in, the various foundations will be regarded differently and hence influence the way people reason about their moral intuitions. On the same note, people living in the same culture can differ drastically on what moral foundations they deem to be of the highest importance. This became most evident in a test carried out by Haidt and his collaborators, where a template of a person's moral foundations would reveal what political party that person voted for (2012).

4. Method

In this chapter, the methodological perspective of the study will be presented. Since a complex social phenomenon is studied, the phenomenological tradition was chosen as the scientific perspective to fit the aim and research questions of the thesis. The perspective strives to ensure that the different lived experiences are represented in their uniquely subjective manner. The voices presented in the study have been gathered through interviews and textual analysis. In order to determine different modes of interpretation, the voices have been analyzed qualitatively and then summarized.

4.1 Scientific perspective

The scientific perspective of this study, with respect to how reality is constituted and how knowledge is gained, is the phenomenological tradition. Usher and Jackson (2014) describe phenomenology as concerned with understanding the nature and characteristics of a phenomenon by constructing a possible representation of everyday experiences, through interpreting the so-called *lived experiences* of the participating voices. The lived experiences will be analyzed in order to present an analysis of different modes of interpretation. Further, for this qualitative thesis, we have chosen an abductive approach to our research, which is described suitable in a situation of uncertainty, where there is a lack of explanation for a phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). Through abductive reasoning, we seek to find the most likely conclusion from the observation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). In this particular study, we argue that we have found an event that is out of the ordinary, which is the removal of Grant without thorough investigation from the department.

4.1.2 Interpretative phenomenology

For this study, we have chosen to adapt the interpretive *Heideggerian* perspective on phenomenology rather than the descriptive *Husserlian* one (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The interpretive perspective is characterized by understanding the phenomenon only in its context, the participants as self-interpretative beings, and the researchers as co-creators of the

interpretation of the phenomenon (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Further, it relies on a fundamental difference from that of the descriptive perspective regarding how interpretations are made. In the tradition of descriptive phenomenology, the researchers are believed to be able to enter an unbiased state, called *bracketing* (Usher & Jackson, 2014). The interpretive tradition believes that a truly unbiased point of view is impossible, since the researchers co-create the interpretation with the participants. Further, Janesick (2000, cited in Usher & Jackson, 2014) highlights that qualitative researchers become the very instrument of the research, meaning that researchers' own experiences might affect how they, in turn, interpret the lived experiences of the study's participants. Lastly, Wojnar and Swanson state that the interpretative phenomenological perspective needs established contextual criteria in order to increase trustworthiness for the findings of the study (2007). Hence, we will use the background and previous research presented in chapter two, as well as the theoretical framework laid out in chapter three, as context in order to interpret the collected data.

4.2 Textual analysis

In order for us to interpret the possible voices in the arena of the Grant case and present various modes of interpretations of the function of Lund University, we performed a qualitative textual analysis on news media articles that contains the keywords “Johan Grant + Externatet”. For our selection of what content to include, we chose articles that were either addressing the specific case of Grant, or that discussed the current state of the university and the function of it, with reference to the Grant-incident. In total, 36 articles were analyzed, plus one radio show. In addition, we looked at all the comment sections to get a better understanding of how the general public think and feel about the subject and found 20 comments in total, which we analyzed as well. Further, we chose to include two additional articles that were not in the search results, but that discussed the function of the university from two different perspectives, exemplifying with Lund University specifically. The analysis was conducted by gathering all of the textual material in a shared online document, and then discussing it with each other in relation to the moral foundation theory. We aimed to reach data saturation, which can be described as gaining insight into all different perspectives on a phenomenon (Usher & Jackson, 2014). In this case, reaching data saturation can be

described as collecting sufficient perspectives within the sub-arena in order to interpret how the voices relate to or trigger the different moral foundations. When analysing the material, we argued that the six moral foundations were found at multiple levels of analysis, thus data saturation was reached. Not all news outlets were included in the final analysis, since some share the same point of view and would therefore be superfluous.

By conducting a textual analysis, we did not have to be limited to the amount of respondents or their willingness to partake in the study, as opposed to doing interviews. One of the many benefits with textual analysis is that the gathered material has not been altered or modified due to the presence of the researcher, which could be the case with interviews (Merriam, 1994).

4.3 Interviews

According to Priest (2002, cited in Usher & Jackson, 2014), the most common form of collecting data within the phenomenological tradition is recording interviews with people that have lived experience of the phenomenon. Hence, to get a nuanced understanding of how people interpret the function of the university, we performed six interviews where we asked relevant actors about several delicate topics, such as student influence, safetyism, the core values of the institution and ultimately discussed what the main function of the university should be.

The implementation of our interview style has been that of a semistructured character, which means that we prepared some questions beforehand, but were open to conceive supplementary questions during the length of the interview (Merriam, 1994). This was done in order to enable the interviewee to speak more freely on the matter, as opposed to us guiding and narrowing down the conversation. As proposed by Trost, the interviewees were regarded as entitled to their own opinions, although we questioned their interpretations in order to fully understand their argumentation (Trost, 1993).

Based on the qualitative nature of our study, generalizable results are not a possibility. Therefore, the selection of interviewees were chosen based on their compatibility, according to our subjective judgement, as this sort of selection is described to provide a more relevant range of interviewees than a random selection (Trost, 1993). In the process of finding the most suitable interviewees for our study, we started with individuals who have spoken publicly on the matter, such as Johan Grant, Erik J. Olsson and Torbjörn von Schantz, and proceeded with their recommendations on relevant participants. Particular effort was put into reflecting all possible perspectives.

4.4 The selection of our interviewees

The first person that we interviewed was Johan Grant, the teacher of Externatet that got removed by the university. The second person was Erik J. Olsson, professor of philosophy at Lund University and spokesperson for the politically independent organization Academic Rights Watch, which serves to investigate instances where the principle of academic freedom might have been violated on universities in Sweden (ARW, 2020). We then proceeded with interviewing both the pro vice-chancellor, Bo Ahrén, and the vice-chancellor of Lund University, Torbjörn von Schantz. This was done in order to get an understanding of how the issue is discussed at the top level of management in Lund University. The fifth person that we interviewed was Lena Halldenius, professor in Human Rights at Lund University. The reason we wanted to talk to Halldenius was because of a recommendation from Erik J. Olsson, who believed that Halldenius represents a point of view that drastically differs from his own. To understand the students' perception, we wanted to interview some that had attended the workshop Externatet at the department of psychology. We interviewed Thomas Nilsson, a postgraduate that attended the course in 2018. Our ambition was to interview the students who had reported Grant to the head of faculty, but unfortunately, they did not want to participate in our study. A loss of these very students' perspectives would be detrimental for our thesis. We therefore chose to include an interview made from a third party - Sveriges Radio - as part of our empiricism. In an episode of Studio Ett, several students spoke out about their lived experiences of Externatet. In addition, we have included an article written by psychology students Isabella Korvenranta-Månsson and Ellinor Avén who attended

Externatet last year. Our primary ambition was to interview the director of studies, as well as the head of faculty of the department of psychology that were responsible for removal Grant. Unfortunately, neither of the two wanted to partake in our study.

4.5 Implementation

The material for the textual analysis was gathered from the digital database Retriever (Mediearkivet). We categorized the textual material in accordance to what moral foundations we interpreted were the most dominant. The same procedure was made with regards to the comment sections. The interviews were conducted from the 23rd of April until the 5th of May. All of the interviewees were contacted via email. The interviews were made via Zoom, due to the current restrictions on physical meetings during COVID-19, with the exception of our interview with Erik J. Olsson, which took place at Espresso House in Lund. The interviews lasted somewhere in between twenty to forty minutes. All of the participants were promised a copy of the finished thesis before it was published, so that they could approve their quotes. After the interviews, we transcribed the material and categorized it according to the six moral foundations. All of the interviews were conducted in Swedish and have been translated into English for the analysis.

4.6 Methodological reflection

Although the aim of this thesis has been to include all of the possible modes of interpretation with regards to the function of the university, it is worth noting that the judgement of what constitutes various opinions have been based on our subjective opinion. It is therefore up for scrutiny whether we have succeeded in that manner or not. We would, nevertheless, welcome further insight into what points of view we might have overlooked and how we could have improved the legitimacy of the study. It is true that we could have conducted our study through focus group interviews with several actors at once. However, we argue that this methodology would constrict the level of expression, as some might consider this topic sensitive, and that there might be social stigma surrounding it, thus constricting the actors attending the focus group. We could also have conducted our study quantitatively instead,

through surveys. The surveys would probably generate a larger response from actors we did not reach in the current form of the study. However, since we seek to understand a complex social debate, we argue that the freedom of verbal communication is favored in order to comprehend what interpretations of the function of the university exists.

Our ambition has been to be as transparent as possible with our collected data so that the reader has the possibility to make up his/her own mind about the conclusions we reach. Although the empirical findings of the study are not generalizable, we have done our utmost to understand the collected data in relation to the theoretical framework and previous research of the thesis, as to arrive at possible theoretical conclusions rather than universally undisputable results. Due to the semi structured nature of our interviews, the respondents have not been faced with identical questions, although the themes have been the same. This way of interviewing was arranged so as to gain the most out of the interviewee and help us better understand the complex issue that we have investigated.

5. Analysis

In the following section, the Grant-incident will be analyzed through the rhetorical arena theory and moral foundation theory. The first part will consist of a macro-analysis where we illustrate the social space that opened up after Grant was removed and what voices that emerged. In the second part, we will analyze the various voices' interpretation of what the function of the university should be, and how those interpretations appeal to the six foundations of morality.

5.1 Macro-analysis

So far, we have been hesitant to make any claims about Lund University being in an organizational crisis. Instead, we have argued that different modes of interpretation regarding incidents such as the removal of Grant invokes the potential to cause a crisis for Lund University in the future. What actually can be defined as an organizational crisis is tricky and can be debated, but as stated in section 3.1, we have relied on Frandsen and Johansens definition of a crisis (2017). Likewise, based on the argumentation of Heide and Simonsson, we have come to understand a crisis as an extensive process of changes and incidents, that starts long before the actual urgent stage of a crisis (2016). Heide and Simonsson stress that in order to avoid a crisis, one must gather information from several sources to uncover vital indicators of an oncoming crisis. With this in mind, what will be presented in this chapter is an overview of the rhetorical arena that opened up after the removal of Grant.

Frandsen and Johansen, as previously mentioned, describe the rhetorical arena as a social space that opens up when an organizational crisis manifests (2017). We find two ways of defining when the arena of this particular study opened. Firstly, one might argue that the arena opened when Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff published “The Coddling of the American Mind” in the Atlantic in September 2015 (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2015) (the article laid the foundation for their 2018 book with the same title). This sparked a larger debate on the function of universities, primarily in the United States and later the UK. Since then, many voices have entered the arena to address and debate the issue as there seems to be a lack of

consensus on what the function of the university entails. The topic is still widely discussed, hence the arena is still open. Although one can expand the arena indefinitely, both in time and space, it risks losing its analytical purpose and thus becomes less useful as a practical tool to understand the communicative processes during a crisis. Therefore, we have defined a sub-arena to the global arena of the function of the university.

The sub-arena opened when Grant was removed from his role as course coordinator for “Psykologernas arbete i grupper och organisationer” at Lund University. With both Grant himself and the students from his course bringing the debate to the news media, the arena opened up to several more actors. Through this act, various stakeholders of Lund University entered the arena; such as the general public, columnists, previous students at the department of psychology, management and coworkers of the university.

5.1.2 The various voices within the arena

The purpose of the macro-analysis is to identify the most prominent voices within the sub-arena and to get an overview of how the voices communicate with one another (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). We have outlined the timespan of the Grant-incident, starting on the 17th of December 2019, proceeding until present day.

On the 17th of December 2019, Grant receives the notion from the head of faculty that he has been removed from the course “Psykologernas arbete i organisationer”. During the first few days of the incident, the voices within the arena consist of Johan Grant, the students who attended Externatet, the head of faculty and the director of studies. A few weeks later, various news media, such as Sydsvenskan, Expressen, Lundagård and Omni picked up on the story and entered the arena. Among them was also Sveriges Radio, who published a short segment of the incident containing several interviews with both previous and current students of the psychology programme, as well as the head of faculty and Grant. Through the media coverage, the arena opened up for other voices to enter, such as the general public in the comment sections, as well as independent columnists. Soon after, Academic Rights Watch wrote a piece on the incident, questioning the way in which the management dealt with the situation (ARW, 2020). On the 16th of February, Grant published a debate article in Svenska

Dagbladet where he shared his thoughts on what happened at Externatet, while simultaneously giving his opinion on the current state of the university with regards to the influence of safetyism (Grant, 2020). On the 18th of February, the vice-chancellor of Lund university Torbjörn Von Schantz joins the debate with a blog entry, stating that he does not want to go into specific cases, but that the university must be able to receive criticism from students without saying that the academic freedom is endangered (Von Schantz, 2020). About a week later, on the 28th of February, psychology students Isabella Korvenranta-Månsson and Ellinor Avén, who attended the last run of Externatet, wrote a response to Grant's article in SvD (Korvenranta & Alvé, 2020). In their article, Korvenranta and Alvé explain how they experienced Grant as a teacher and what had caused them to report him to higher authorities. After this point in time, the different actors continue to reiterate their opinions within the sub-arena, with the addition of other columnists and news media.

In the figure below we have tried to visualize how the various voices communicate in the rhetorical sub-arena, based on the macro-model proposed by Frandsen and Johansen (2017). The arrows indicate what voices talk to, with and about each other. In the arena, different voices have the capacity to enter dialogue and correspond with each other. Hence, one-way arrows in the model indicate voices talking to or about each other, and two-way arrows indicate voices talking with each other. From our perspective, dialogue was never truly achieved in the sense that the actors communicated directly with each other. Instead, the actors communicated to and about each other, in media that were structured to reflect an opinion of a certain actor, which prompted the other actor to not be able to fully partake in dialogical exchange. Hence, the arrows that attempt dialogue are pictured in red. For example, Grant and psychology students Korvenranta-Månsson and Avén responded to each other's debate articles, which could be interpreted as a form of dialogue. However, we regard these instances as separate opinionated pieces, talking to and about the other actor, rather than with them. Further, some of the actors have been interviewed by the media, which could also be interpreted as a form of dialogue. Nevertheless, we argue that these instances do not achieve a truly dialogical exchange, as they would have if they, for example, sat down to discuss the issue with each other.

We want to underline that although our ambition is to present a detailed description of how the arena operates, Frandsen and Johansen state that it is practically impossible for one actor to fully include all of the complexities and nuances that occur in the social space surrounding a crisis (2017).

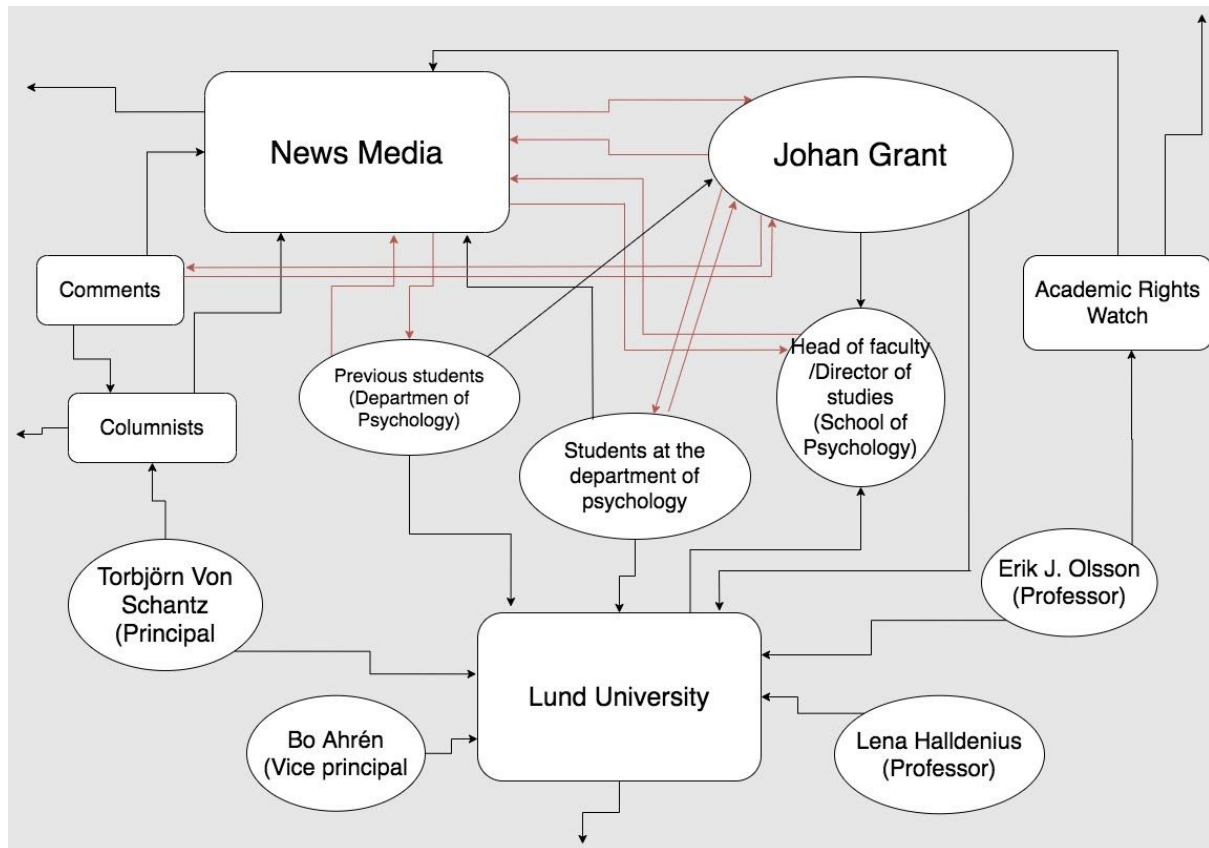


Figure 5.2 “The reathorical sub-arena of the Johan Grant case”

An analysis of the various voices within the arena show that many of them are closely associated with Lund University’s main stakeholders - such as the students, coworkers and management - but that additional voices appear, which do not have a close relationship with the university. This is an important note to address, since organizations tend to communicate primarily with their stakeholders in situations of crisis, and therefore might overlook the influence of the additional voices; such as columnists and the general public (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). In summary, the macro-analysis provides an insight of the complexity of the situation, the lack of dialogical exchange and simultaneously showcases all of the voices that have potentially been ignored or missed.

5.2 Micro-analysis

The purpose of the micro-analysis is to comprehend the communicative processes between actors in the arena. The communicative process in itself is made up of a sender, who produces and transmits a message, and a receiver, who interprets the messages (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). In this sense, the sender might have a particular intention in mind, but the message could be interpreted in another way by the receiver. The macro-analysis showcases the complexities of the social space that opened up in the removal of Grant. In the micro-analysis, we will analyze how the various actors communicate, to each and about each other. As described in 3.3, the microanalysis is determined by four parameters: context, media, genre and text. For this thesis, we have put the most attention to text, since it constitutes the verbal and written communication of the voices.

Context, media, genre and text:

Context is described as both the social and psychological factors of an actor that might affect how it communicates and interprets a message. For this thesis, determining the social and psychological factors of each actor is impossible. Instead, we have defined the context to how we as researchers interpret the social milieu of modern universities, based on the background and previous research presented in chapter two. We have gathered material in the form of verbal communication from interviews and radio shows, written communication in the form of digital news media, comments and columnists. The genres of the collected data are interviews conducted by news media; interviews conducted by us; debate articles, i.e. columnists within the news media; blog entries; news articles; comment sections. All of the interviews, as well as the digital media, can be defined as texts and will be analyzed more thoroughly in the following chapters.

5.3 What are the competing modes of morality found in actors' interpretations of the function of the university?

In this part of the analysis, we will present what the different voices seem to claim with regards to what the function of the university is, analyzed through the lens of moral foundation theory. The analysis serves to both highlight how the different voices within the sub-arena differ in their opinions, and possible explanations to why that is. Each section of analysis will start off in the Grant-incident, and then expand to include the various voices' general opinions and perceptions about the function of the university. It is important to note that the categorizations of moral foundations does not imply what morality a person has, something that would be impossible for us to know. Rather, what we are exploring is how various statements trigger different moral foundations, and later, how those foundations work in relation to each other. To further accentuate, the voices should not be read as advocates for a certain moral foundation, but as illustrations of how different morals are promoted or provoked in their statements. From here on, we will refer to each moral foundation by their first title, e.g. care/harm = care.

5.3.1 Care/harm

On the 9th of February, 2020, Sveriges Radio published a nine minute long segment on what had happened at Externatet in the fall of 2019, and what had caused five students to drop off the course in response to Grant's way of teaching (Landenius & Dahlstedt, 2020). The radio show featured both previous and current students at the department of psychology, as well as Grant and the head of faculty.

A recurring theme among the students who in Studio Ett describe their experience from attending Externatet, both last year and before that, was feelings of being unsafe. One student describes how she was ridiculed and humiliated, and that Externatet affected her deeply since the environment of her studies was very important to her sense of self being (Elisabeth in Landenius & Dahlstedt, 2020). Another student stated that exploring difficult and tough feelings is important to be able to become a psychologist, but that without the feeling of

safety during class, it risks becoming a traumatic experience instead (Isabella in Landenius & Dahlstedt, 2020). A third student argued that the whole experience of Externatet felt unethical since he could not help his friends and future colleagues who were feeling horrible, because of the premise of the worksop (Love in Landenius & Dahlstedt, 2020). After the three students had spoken about their experiences of Externatet, Studio Ett interviewed the head of faculty, asking him about how the milieu of Externatet seemed unsafe for students (Landenius & Dahlstedt, 2020). The head of faculty answered by stating that a good education is often challenging, but that it should not under any circumstances feel unsafe (Robert in Landenius & Dahlstedt, 2020).

Based on the moral foundation of care, which is concerned with compassion towards one's own kin, and is triggered by the suffering of others (Haidt, 2012), we interpret the claims put forward by the different voices above as appealing to the care foundation. That is to say, our interpretation of the claims is that they speak heavily to feelings of caring and kindness, and to the idea that someone or something opposing these values is morally incorrect. Based on this foundation, one crucial function of the university is to create a social space that enables students to feel safe and comfortable, thus enabling them to learn and evolve. Anna Blennow, professor in latin at Gothenburg University, wrote an article for *Sydsvenskan* where she argued that universities must enable safe spaces for the sake of greater knowledge and understanding (Blennow, 2020). Safe spaces in the sense that higher education is to be based on an unpolitical platform as well as in teachers and students awareness of the multitude of identities that occupy the universities.

In response to the offended students, Grant claimed that there were never any objective harassments taking place during Externatet, only the students felt harassed (Lennartsson, 2020). Professor in Human Rights studies Lena Halldenius, problematize this statement by explaining how implicit bias works. In our interview with Halldenius, she argued that some actions might be unconsciously affected by one's own presuppositions (2020). For example, Halldenius mentioned that anonymous correction of exams has led to a more equal treatment of individuals, regardless of sociocultural status (2020). In this way, it is possible that Grant acted out of implicit bias, and that he was not aware of how his behaviour was interpreted by the students.

In a debate article in SvD, the students Korvenranta-Månsson and Avén described how Grant normalized a situation that in any other circumstance would not be okay (2020). “Emotional reactions were met with indifference and were neglected through the use of arguments such as ‘sometimes it’s got to be able to sting a little’, ‘crying can become a suppression technique’, ‘kindness can go to far’, and ‘everyone can’t feel good all the time’” (2020). Finally, they argued that their education should be in line with the ethical principles and policies of the university, claiming that these demands do not interrupt the principle of freedom of speech (Korvenranta-Månsson & Alvé, 2020).

This brings us to the bigger debate surrounding the sub-arena, where there seems to be a general disagreement as to what degree academic freedom is endangered by the upset voices and demands of students. In the winter of 2019, a disputed incident took place at Uppsala University when teacher Inga-Lill Aronsson used the n-word to illustrate what words to use for searching the archive in old texts about race and ethnicity (Aquilonius, 2020). The teacher was later reported to higher authorities by four students. Eriksson-Baaz et al. wrote (2020) a debate article in response to another article which defended the teacher who had uttered the n-word (Widmalm et al., 2020). Eriksson-Baaz et al. argued that the implication of words are heavily based on who utters them, claiming that power, privileges and injustices are crucial factors to determine and maintain structural differences in society (Eriksson-Baaz et al., 2020). Further, they argue that the usage of the specific n-word implies a terrible oppression towards a group of people, who has suffered tremendously throughout history. “Must not these experiences be taken seriously if we want a more inclusive university?” (Eriksson-Baaz et al., 2020, translated by Durlind & Nyström).

Our interpretation of the debate articles presented above is that one vital function of the university is to be as inclusive and safe as possible, and that marginalized groups should be handled with special concern due to their historical past and the structural oppression they have experienced/experience. From a moral perspective, these virtues seem to tend to the care foundation, where protecting the victimized against harm is considered of highest priority. Eriksson-Baaz et al. conclude their article by sending a reminder to the reader that racism is steadily increasing in society, and that the university is part of society (Eriksson-Baaz et al.,

2020). Hence, we interpret that the authors suggest that part of the university's function is to work as a catalyst for social change, where compassion and care would be the main guidelines to help steer the university in the morally right direction.

5.3.2 Fairness/cheating

On the 18th of February, Emma Jaenson published an article in Blekinge Läns Tidning, in response to the removal of Grant, the accusations made against Hesslow (described in the introduction) as well as an incident that took place on Gothenburg University in 2019 when activists tried to stop the Swedish Democrats spokesperson Richard Jomshof from giving a lecture (Jaenson, 2020). Jaenson claims that the common denominator in all of the instances is that there is a minority of students who are not interested in listening to anyone that counteracts their preconceptions. Further, she argues that political activism has become the main focal point of these few students, where the norm within Swedish universities has become to not question a student if they feel offended (2020). Jaenson raises an alarming note of what will happen to the university if teachers do not dare to talk or lecture about certain topics out of fear of offending a few students.

Through the lens of moral foundation theory, Jaenson's response to the instances could be interpreted in a couple of ways. Primarily, there seems to be a general appeal to the fairness foundation, where rendered justice according to shared rules is viewed as optimal. The principle of academic freedom underlines freedom to discussion, no matter the controversy of the subject (UNESCO, 2017). Jaenson seems to react to the unfairness of the fact that a minority of students have the power to shape the way in which teachers lecture. Furthermore, the proposed idea that the universities are becoming less open for alternative views harms the trustworthiness of the university as a whole. Trustworthiness, as described by Haidt (2012), is a prevalent quality of the fairness foundation, where the lack of trustworthiness attributed to both individuals and organizations has the potential to cause anger and even disgust among certain people.

Although Jaenson paints a vivid picture of how universities are suffering from the trend of offended students and hence a hampered academic freedom, Halldenius is not so convinced

that the problem is as frequent as some make it to be (Halldenius, 2020). Halldenius sees instances as the ones concerning Grant, Hesslow or Ringmar as extremely rare. During her eight years of teaching at Lund University, she can name but a couple of instances that bear any resemblance to the cases described above (2020). Halldenius argues that the media has blown up the disputed cases in proportion, signifying that there is a larger social and perhaps even ideological debate fueling the conversation.

During our interview with Grant, one of his main concerns was that after eight years of consistent lecturing, with an average of 80% of students rating the course as “good” to “very good” (Grant, 2020), he was removed without investigation from the department of psychology. In the comment section to an article in *Lundagård* about what happened at Externatet, one person wrote: “Very sad that a minority of students ruin it for the rest.” (Kalle, 2020, translated by Durlind & Nyström). Previous student Thomas Nilsson said in an interview with us that the problem that occurred during Externatet was never thoroughly solved (Nilsson, 2020). Nilsson felt that there was a general lack of willingness from the department of psychology to look at alternative points of view, and that instead they acted out of care for the offended students. Nilsson looks back at his own experience of Externatet as one of the most valuable experiences during his whole study time, although it was very challenging. “I experienced it as immensely evolving, both personally and professionally. It helped the group with the social issues that we had.” (2020).

In contrast to the moral foundation of care, which main concern is the wellbeing and safety of others, the foundation of fairness main triggers consists of unjust treatment according to shared rules. In the Grant-incident, what can be interpreted as unfairness occurred at two levels: 1) through the removal of Grant without investigation and 2) through the loss of Grant as teacher for those who enjoyed the course and the workshop.

At a third level of analysis, Korvenranta-Månssons and Avéns debate article in *SvD* can be interpreted as triggering the fairness foundation through objecting to Grant’s way of subjective teaching (2020). The students argued that Grant based his lecturing on his own personal values and opinions, and that it was not performed in accordance with the course

objectives. In this sense, the fairness foundation can be interpreted as triggered by Grant not honoring the shared rules of what the course was supposed to entail.

In a debate article in *Uppsala Nya Tidning*, Widmalm et al. argued that academic freedom is to encompass all, no matter the ethnical background or social privilege of an individual (2020). Widmalm et al. article was the initial response to the Aronsson-incident (which later Eriksson-Baaz et al. responded to). More specifically, Widmalm et al. argued that the fact that Aronsson had been white should not decide whether she had the privilege or non-privilege to use the n-word in the context that she did. “Equal terms implies both that the accuser and the accused have the same rights and obligations - no matter skin color or ascribed epithet (for example ‘non-racialized’)” (2020, translated by Durlind & Nyström).

In summary, the fairness foundation is triggered when there is a sense that the concept of justice has been neglected. With regards to the Grant-incident, some of the voices within the arena interpret that the rights of Grant as a legitimate teacher for Externatet was violated when he was removed without investigation. Likewise, some students experienced unfairness in the way in which Grant was basing the course on his own subjective values. In the larger arena concerning the function of the university, the fairness foundation is interpreted as triggered when academic freedom is hampered or in some way affected unjustly according to a perceived agreement of a shared ruleset. In addition, it can be argued that academic freedom is perceived by some voices as a principle which constitutes the very trustworthiness of the university, and hence, its function.

5.3.3 Loyalty/betrayal

In the interview with previous psychology student Nilsson, he described the culture of the department of psychology as heavily influenced by a social climate where individuals were expected to behave in a certain manner (Nilsson, 2020). He said that breaking that norm would potentially result in social alienation or that the others in the group would think differently about you. The norm was characterized by an aggressive demeanor towards ideas or sayings that were not in line with the culture of the group (2020). Hence, Nilsson’s fear of challenging the social climate of his group can be interpreted as appealing to the loyalty

foundation, where one of the main attributes consists of sensitivity to actions which reveal if a person is a team player or not.

The general fear of breaking the norm of what is considered morally correct was something that Erik J. Olsson mentioned during our interview with him. According to Olsson, who has been highly critical of the way in which academic freedom suffers from instances such as the Grant-incident, believed that many share his opinions, but are afraid to speak of them. “[...] it’s a bit touchy with the kind of opinions that I have” (Olsson, 2020). Grant also pointed out that, according to his experience, there is a heavy norm within the university of what you are allowed to think and say, and what is regarded as controversial. Specifically, he recalls that some of his students have complained to him about other teachers in the department of psychology, and that the students are tired of teachers not daring to say what they actually think (Grant, 2020).

Our interpretation of Grant and Olssons comments is that they experience parts of the university as heavily affected by a particular norm of what one is supposed to think and say, and that stepping outside of that norm can be riskful for one's reputation and career. From a moral foundation perspective, the loyalty foundation could be regarded as triggered when individuals step outside the norm of the university. What this norm actually entails is, however, impossible for us to concretize. Nevertheless, what is interesting with regards to the loyalty foundation is that some people seem to react to a strong group mentality within Lund University and that, according to their experience, objecting to that culture is met with sanctions and social punishment. Our interpretation from the statements put forward by both Grant, Olsson and Nilsson, is that the function of the university is hampered by the strong culture of what one is allowed to say, which can be described as loyalty to the group.

5.3.4 Authority/subversion

During Externatet, as a result of a verbal conflict between Grant and a student, Grant asked the group attending the workshop if they had read the course literature assigned to them (Grant, 2020). As he talked to the students, it became apparent that only five students had done so, with the others explicitly claiming that they had not. In our interview with Grant, he

expressed a level of surprise, both with how honest the students were, and by the fact that basically no one had bothered to read the literature (Grant, 2020). To us, Grant's interpretation of the groups response was that it said a lot about the social norm within it, and how fear of an authority was not a part of it. From a moral foundation perspective, Grant's reaction can be interpreted as triggered by the insult to his authoritative position as a teacher. More so, the students that attended Externatet were arguably, according to Grant's description of the event, not particularly concerned with feelings of respect for hierarchies and leadership.

In our interview with Olsson, he described how a change is taking place inside of the university, with regards to how teachers are perceived and treated (Olsson, 2020). Whereas the teacher before had the privilege to shape and mold the content of each course based - to a larger degree - on subjective opinions, he or she is now expected to oblige to the guidelines given by each faculty. This, Olsson believes, is the result of the implementation of new public management and the way in which it has come to shape the structure of the university, where teachers are increasingly seen as exchangeable units (2020). In addition, Olsson claimed that students nowadays experience a larger amount of influence with regards to their education, compared to what they have had historically. Based on the moral foundation of authority, where leadership and followership are considered virtues, we interpret Olsson's statement as reacting negatively to the development of the teachers role, and that he is problematizing the increasing amounts of influence given to students.

In contrast to Olssons somewhat sceptical outlook on student influence, Torbjörn von Schantz - the vice-chancellor of Lund University - regarded it as something very desirable (von Schantz, 2020). Von Schantz stated that he is extremely proud of the kind of student influence that exists in Sweden, and that he has only experienced it as something positive. When asking the vice-chancellor about what he thought about students who have turned to third parties to solve a conflict with the teacher, his response was that the teacher carries a responsibility to retain good relations with his/her students (2020). From his perspective, a student who turns to higher authorities might not have very good trust in his/her teacher, something that is up to the teacher to enshrine (2020).

For Olsson, the function of the university is dependent on the fact that it stands free from the pressures and ideologies of society: "Often, students come to the university with the norms of society, having read different things and believe that all others think like them." (Olsson, 2020). According to Olsson, the role of teacher is to be erudite and knowledgeable, confronting students with ideas that they may not be familiar with (2020). Further, he described that the university should not adjust because of fluctuations in society.

In our interview with Halldenius (2020), she described a general change from the 1980's, when the university was mainly occupied by white men, whereas now there are a lot of different backgrounds in the classroom, and that this change is healthy for the function of the university. Halldenius argued that the diversity of background facilitates discussions, offering the students several points of views. In contrast to the claims put forward by Olsson, we interpret Halldenius' view on the progressive movement within universities as something good and desirable.

In conclusion, the moral foundation of authority becomes most apparent during instances of dispute between students and teachers. We interpret that the comments put forward by both Grant and Olssons appeals partly to the moral foundation of authority, in the sense that respect for tradition and sensitivity to hierarchies is displayed. Further, we interpreted a discrepancy between the voices in what the function of the university should be, with regards to how authorities should constitute the experience of learning. That is to say, whether or not it is deemed desirable, for the sake of the function of the university, that student's have an increased amount of influence in the classroom.

5.3.5 Sanctity/degradation

During our interview with Bo Ahrén, the pro vice-chancellor of Lund University, Ahrén spoke about the long history of the university and why it has survived as an institution for hundreds of years (Ahrén, 2020). He argued that the survival of the university, dating back to the 12th century, can be attributed to its tradition of being free from the reigning powers in society. Without its core principles of autonomy and academic freedom, Ahrén thinks that the university probably would not survive (2020). From a moral foundation perspective, it can be

argued that the longevity of the university, along with its tradition of autonomy and academic freedom, appeals to the moral of sanctity. More specifically, one might view the very essence of the university as something hallowed, which is worth preserving for the sake of its sacredness.

In our interview with von Schantz, he described that students today view the university less and less as an omniscient organization, and that they instead turn to other sources of information such as Google to form a primary understanding of different phenomena, before discussing them in the classroom (2020). He continued by saying that this makes it harder for teachers today than it was before, when students entered the classroom without presuppositions about what was going to be discussed (2020). In relation to the moral foundation of sanctity, we interpret that von Schantz described the students today as critical to the knowledge taught in the classroom, and more self sufficient in relation to education today than before, in a manner that triggers the moral foundation of sanctity. That is to say, students today no longer seem to view the university as something hallowed, but rather that the information itself is sacred. Finally, von Schantz stated that he believes that it is a good thing that teachers and students “meet with their different worlds”, as he believes it to be mutually beneficial (2020).

5.3.6 Liberty/oppression

In Studio Ett, many of the students' description of their experience of Externatet has to do with their interpretation of Grant as an oppressive teacher (Landenius & Dahlstedt, 2020). Students were not allowed to break the rules of the Tavistock method that were used during the workshop, which hindered them to express themselves as they would have otherwise. Korvenranta-Månsson and Avén described that the Tavistock-method only facilitates expression from the perspective of one self, thus restricting them from discussing from a structurally and historically conscious perspective (2020). In our interview with Grant, he described how he entered the role as a consultant during the workshop, in order to guide the students towards the mission of the assignment (Grant, 2020). This, however, disabled him to address students in the empathetic and compassionate way that a teacher normally responds to his/her students (2020). Korvenranta-Månsson and Avén described how Grant was abusing

his power, and that since the workshop was obligatory to pass the course, they felt restricted and that they could not leave (2020).

From a moral foundation perspective, Korvenranta-Månsson and Avéns response to Externatet can be interpreted as appealing to the foundation of liberty. Triggers that are normally found within the liberty foundation are those of signs of attempted domination or violations of one's liberty (Haidt, 2012). According to the two students, Grant had violated their rights as student's on a multitude of levels, primarily by not following the course guidelines and using his own subjective opinions to structure the workshop.

On a bigger scale, the liberty foundation can be found in the argumentation posed by Widmalm et al. in their article on academic freedom (2020). The writers claim that due to the polarized climate of society, universities are becoming increasingly influenced by normative forces that oppress the ability to think and speak freely. They oppose the idea that teachers should base their range of expression on their own sociocultural attributes and affiliations, in favor of that all teachers should be free to express themselves without limitations (2020).

Hence, the foundation of liberty is primarily showcased through the appeal to feelings of having the liberty to say whatever one wishes to.

In summary, the moral foundation of liberty can be found on a micro-level as well as on a macro-level. In the micro-level, concerning the specific incident that took place during Externatet, some students experienced Grant as an oppressor and through their argumentation, appealed to the moral of liberty. On a macro-level, columnist Widmalm et al. argue (2020) that the university is suffering from a climate where one's ability for free speech is hampered by a particular culture which can be interpreted as oppressive. Thus, we interpret that their idea of the function of what the university should be, is an institution that facilitates the freedom of expression, and maybe more importantly, that it should never oppress its members.

6. Conclusion and further research

For this thesis, our aim was to explore what voices emerged within the rhetorical arena after the removal of Grant, and to understand what competing modes or morality can be found in actors' interpretations of what the function of the university should be. This was done, first and foremost, in order to highlight possible indicators of an oncoming organizational crisis (Heide & Simonsson, 2016).

In the macro analysis, we discovered what voices appeared in the social arena after Grant was removed and how they relate to each other. Other than serving as a visual overview to comprehend all of the actors involved, the macro analysis served to highlight the communicative complexities and how the voices fail to enter dialogue with each other. Instead, it appears as if the voices rather communicate their opinion to and about one another, but that dialogue was hardly achieved anywhere. From a crisis communication perspective, this is interesting, since Heide and Simonsson stress that one of the crucial factors to be able to localize potential indicators of an oncoming organizational crisis is openness and dialogue within the organization, as well as with its stakeholders (2016).

In the micro-analysis, we tried to outline how the six moral foundations are triggered at different levels of analysis with regards to both the Grant-incident, as well as the interpreted function of what the university should be. We want to underline that no moral foundation is regarded as superior to another, and that moral foundations are not mutually exclusive within individuals, but rather can be interpreted as triggered in relation to the different statements of the voices. From our analysis, one major discrepancy seems to appear between the care and the fairness foundation. Whereas the main concern of the care foundation consists of the wellbeing of individuals, the fairness foundation is activated when a sense of injustice according to a shared ruleset has occurred. Regarding the function of the university, we interpret these two foundations to often be incongruent with each other. According to the virtues and priorities of the care foundation, the function of the university is to be as inclusive as possible, taking care of and creating safe spaces for its members so as to better gain knowledge and produce research. In contrast, the fairness foundation is primarily concerned

with the sense of justice based on the principle of academic freedom, where the emotional wellbeing of the individual is secondary. This creates an apparent clash between interests, most notable in disputed instances where some people have been offended or violated due to statements that others regard as necessary in order to attain knowledge and truth.

Other discrepancies can be found between the authority and the liberty foundation. The authority foundation can be interpreted as triggered when preconceived ideas about the hierarchical structure between teachers and students are violated. That is, when teachers view their hierarchical position as questioned by a subordinate, and vice versa, when a student feels oppressed by the teacher's authority. The loyalty foundation became most noticeable when the actors discussed how there is a strong in-group mentality that is prevalent within Lund University, and that it might be costly to one's social status to question that very culture. Our interpretations of the sanctity foundation with regards to the function of the university becomes most apparent when looking at what value is ascribed to the university. That is to say, to what degree the university is regarded as something hallowed by its long tradition and ancient lineage. Discrepancies can be interpreted as to occur when there is a disagreement on what qualities of the universities long tradition is worth maintaining, and to what extent progressivity is regarded as desirable.

The findings of our study indicate that there is a possible clash between moral foundations that alters the way in which the very function of the university is perceived. We argue that the moral conflict hinders the possibility to enter dialogue, which in turn polarizes the debate. According to the reasoning of Heide and Simonsson (2016), organizational crises develop through a lack of openness and dialogue within an organization. Hence, the polarization of the debate can be understood as a possible indicator of an oncoming organizational crisis for Lund University.

Our suggestion for future research would be to perform a quantitative analysis of the opinions of teachers, students and other members of Lund University and what they perceive the main function of the university to be. The study would include a test of one's moral foundations, and later questions about what parts of the universities function they regard as most important. Such a study would provide a statistically significant understanding on how

different moral foundations might determine interpretations of the function of the university. Another interesting study to conduct would be to quantitatively research how teachers and students perceive the social norms within Lund University, and to what degree it affects their ability to voice their opinions freely.

7. Discussion

What is the purpose of the university? Or, to put it in Aristotelian terms, what is the telos of the university? The most common words that appear with respect to the academic world, on university crests and logotypes, are “truth” and “knowledge” (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2018). Assuming that the telos of a university is to provide students with the tools and methods necessary for finding truth and knowledge, then a university that fails to transmit those values is not a good university. But at what cost is truth and knowledge to be found? What some deem to be acts of free speech and academic freedom, others view as attempts to violate and discriminate. And at what level should the wellbeing of students be prioritized? These are difficult questions that are complex in their very core. In this thesis, we have tried to explore the multifaceted question of how morality can affect one’s interpretation of what the function of the university should be. What we found was apparent clashes between morals, most noticeably between the care and fairness foundations. From our conclusions, it can be argued that an alternative to the previous telos of the university, i.e. the search for truth, is to be found inside the rhetoric of the care foundation. That is, that the purpose of the university is not so much finding truth as it is to facilitate social change for the betterment of society.

Apart from the discrepancies found in moral foundations, society as a whole is confronted with two opposing cultures of morality; that of dignity and victimhood culture. From our interpretations, it can be argued that victimhood culture appeals to the triggers found in the care foundation, by the moral status attributed to victims (Campbell & Manning, 2018). This, in turn, poses a challenge for all universities. How is an institution that relies on its autonomy, academic freedom and critical thinking, to navigate in a moral landscape where nurturing and caring for marginalized groups are of the highest importance? Furthermore, what are the long term consequences of treating individuals as emotionally vulnerable, as is the case within the cultural tendencies of safetyism? Are we truly helping people to grow stronger by shielding them from uncomfortable facts, or is it simply making them more fragile and in bigger need of protection later on? Due to the very nature of safetyism and victimhood culture, which appeals to a third party to solve conflict, the university must take a stance in every dubious instance, regardless if they wish to do so or not. Neglecting the

responsibility of mediating the conflict could potentially result in an organizational crisis in the form of an institutional discrepancy. To further complicate the situation, many teachers within the university are probably pressured to make fast and efficient decisions, much due to the organizational structure of new public management, which leaves little time to discuss the outcomes of each decision. Thanks to new public management, every department is more autonomous which enables efficiency, but perhaps further risks to increase fragmentation and discrepancy within the institution.

What is most needed appears to be a healthy discussion of what actually constitutes the function of the university. One of the most noteworthy experiences in the making of this study is the lack of that very conversation. On the contrary, in our ambition to reach the perspectives from as many relevant voices as possible, we have been met by a surprising degree of silence, indifference and preconceived ideas about our ideological motivation. This proves how polarized the debate has become, which makes it even harder to comprehend an already complex situation. However, the fact that so many others were willing to partake in our study and discuss a complex and sometimes controversial topic, proves that there is great hope for the future of the university.

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Appendix

Although the interviews were based on a semistructured character, designed for each particular participant's role within the university, these are some of the questions that were asked to the interviewees. Overall, the interviews varied quite drastically from each other and free discussion was encouraged. All of the interviews were conducted in Swedish.

Can you describe your profession/occupation?

Are you aware of the Johan Grant-incident that occurred at the department of psychology at Lund University last fall? (If not, we describe the case)

How do you interpret the removal of Johan Grant?

What responsibility does the university have in situations like these?

How do you interpret the term safetyism?

What are your thoughts on the terms microaggressions, safe spaces and trigger warnings?

Are you worried/concerned with the current state of the university?

How do you interpret the core values of Lund University?

How do you view the balance between student influence and the teachers role in the classroom?

How did you experience Externatet? (for Nilsson and Grant)